

#5

Song

Although its lyrics are based on only a few lines of poetic text, this song has so much melodic sequence and exact repetition that it is the longest one in the collection. The song's form reveals the repetition: the leader's opening phrases carry the song's key textual information and melodic idea (A1); the group follows with the same text, repeated verbatim as a direct quote, set to a tune that completes the leader's tonal and melodic logic (A2). This call-and-response is repeated exactly (A1A2 A1A2). A section of new material follows in which leader and group make a complete poetic and melodic idea by trading short phrases; this idea is repeated, albeit with a change in tune (B1B2). Finally, the entire opening material is performed once, yielding an overall form of A1A2 A1A2 B1B2 A1A2. In the context of Ewe dance-drumming songs, this sort of rounded ABA form is classic.

The structure of the tune is similarly familiar. In the A section the leader opens in the upper end of the pitch range, gradually working down; the group echoes the leader's melodic motion but with lower pitches, gradually coming to rest on the song's tonal center. (Note: I have set the finalis of song #5 to d4 to reduce ledger lines above the staff.) In the B section the phrases are shorter and carry more rhythmic punch than in the A section; the call-and-response occurs more quickly and the tessitura rises when the material repeats. The tonality of the song appears to be anhemitonic pentatonic even though there are six pitch classes. I hear the mode as 1-2-4-5-7^b (d4-e4-g4-a4-c5); I theorize the f4 (modal degree 3) as an added pitch that appears only a lower neighbor to g4 (m.6).

Rhythmically, the song's surface conforms to the underlying metric structures, i.e., it feels comfortably in four. In the A section the melodic rhythm subtly accentuates four-beats 2 and 4 by matching the bell's long note on four-beat 4 and locating significant melodic action on four-beat 2. The tune always has unison hits with bell strokes 5-6-7, which imparts a touch of upbeat six flavor that further contributes to the strength of beats 2 and 4. (In the implicit metric matrix, upbeat six-feel beats have unisons with four-beats 2 and 4.) Consistently, the melody de-emphasizes ONE, which supports the backbeat character of the A section. In addition to the faster speed of call-and-response, the percussive energy of the B section comes from the repetition of the pickup-onbeat figures that set the words "wo nyawo" ("captured") on four-beats 3-4-1. In performance the song gains dynamic energy from the way singers play with binary and ternary time feels, that is, taking a four-beat in three or two equal portions (shown in notation as three eighths or two dotted eighths). In the lead sheet of the song I have fixed the tune's opening section as having a contrast between the leader's binary timing (m.2) and the group's ternary timing (m.6) but as shown in the score and heard on the sound recording, there is considerable leeway and variation.

Drumming

This kidi phrase exemplifies the way the musical identity of a drum part in Agbadza depends upon its polyrhythmic duet with the bell phrase and setting within the metric matrix. Taken in isolation, the kidi phrases in compositions #4 and #5 appear to be identical but their differences become evident when considered within their ensemble context. Specifically, kidi #5 is set one pulse later within the bell phrase, i.e., the first

pair of bounces is offbeat within four-beat 4 (4.2-4.3, pulses 11-12), while the first bounce in the second pair of bounces falls squarely on four-beat 2. (Note: during interviews GFA preferred to set kidi #5 in the same alignment as kidi #4; personally, I like the way they performed it on the CD.) What is the musical impact of this placement of the phrase? Slipping in between the onbeats of four-beats 4-1 but landing right on four-beat 2, kidi helps undermine the force of ONE and accentuate beat 2, thus supporting this tendency in the tune.

In addition to its primary musical role--playing the drum language that calls kidi--sogo's improvisation shapes the rhythmic force of composition #5 in two ways. Working with dzi strokes that match kidi bounces and softer tsa strokes, sogo frequently articulates 3:2 over four-beats 3-4 (quarters : dotted quarters); this reinforces the accentuation pattern in the rattle but goes against the structurally engrained three-then-two pattern of the metric matrix. Within four-beat 1 sogo either plays duplet tsa fills or offbeat ga figures that lead to a dzi stroke that matches a kidi bounce on four-beat 2; in these ways sogo undermines the structural force of ONE, a tendency that is an important aspect of #5's musical personality.